

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8665

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION USBERLIN

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BONN 04162

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PFOR, WB, GB, US, UK, FR, UR

SUBJECT: ABRASIMOV'S REAPPOINTMENT TO EAST BERLIN

REF: BONN 3897

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH THE AMBASSADOR ON MARCH 12, FONOFF POLITICAL DIRECTOR VAN WELL EXPRESSED SOME SURPRISE AT THE UNANIMITY WITH WHICH THE THREE WESTERN AMBASSADORS, AT THEIR RECENT QUADRIPARTITE LUNCHEON WITH STATE SECRETARY GEHLHOFF (REFTEL), HAD INTERPRETED ABRASIMOV'S REAPPOINTMENT AS SIGNIFYING A POSSIBLE HARDENING OF SOVIET ATTITUDES TOWARD BERLIN. THE AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT THERE WERE BASICALLY TWO THOUGHTS WHICH UNDERLAY THIS INTERPRETATION: FIRST, THAT THE GDR WAS MOVING AHEAD TOO FAST IN ITS PACKAGE OF PROPOSALS FOR NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE FRG AND IN DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE RELATIONS WITH THE WEST, AND THE SOVIETS WANTED TO PUT ON THE BRAKES; SECOND, THAT THE
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SOVIETS WERE INCREASINGLY DISSATISFIED WITH DEVELOPMENTS

RELATING TO THE QUADRIpartite AGREEMENT AND WERE DETERMINED TO GET THEM UNDER CONTROL THROUGH THE APPLICATION OF A MORE EXPERIENCED HAND. THESE THEORIES WERE NOT OF COURSE MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE. THE AMBASSADOR POINTED TO THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE SOVIETS MIGHT WANT TO REACTIVATE QUADRIpartite MECHANISMS, AND THAT THEY MIGHT ASK FOR CONSULTATIONS UNDER THE QA.

2. VAN WELL COMMENTED THAT HE DID NOT THINK THE GDR WOULD BE VERY HAPPY ABOUT THE RETURN OF ABRASIMOV, WHOSE ROLE IN THE REMOVAL OF ULBRICHT HAD NOT BEEN FORGOTTEN. ONE POSSIBLE EXPLANATION FOR ABRASIMOV'S RETURN, VAN WELL SAID, WAS A PUTATIVE DESIRE ON THE PART OF THE SOVIETS FOR FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS DESIGNED, AMONG OTHER THINGS, TO CLARIFY THE ISSUE OF THE WEST GERMAN FEDERAL PRESENCE IN BERLIN. VAN WELL SPECULATED THAT THE SOVIETS MAY HAVE FELT INCREASINGLY FRUSTRATED OVER THEIR FAILURE TO SORT OUT RELATIONS WITH THE FRG AND REALIZE THE FULL POTENTIAL OF AN IMPROVED MOSCOW-BONN RELATIONSHIP, INCLUDING ITS IMPACT ON THEIR OVERALL RELATIONS WITH WESTERN EUROPE. INSTEAD, THE TWO COUNTRIES FOUND THEMSELVES INCREASINGLY ESTRANGED FROM ONE ANOTHER AS A RESULT OF NEGATIVE AND PETTY DEBATES OVER BERLIN ISSUES. VAN WELL SAID THAT HE HAD TOLD THE SOVIETS LONG AGO THAT THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE A SOLUTION PERMITTING INSTITUTIONS IN BERLIN TO ENJOY THE BENEFITS OF TREATIES CONCLUDED BY THE FRG AND WHICH ARE EXTENDED TO BERLIN. VAN WELL ALSO MENTIONED AIR QUESTIONS AS A POSSIBLE AREA FOR NEGOTIATIONS.

3. COMMENT: EVIDENTLY WHEN HE TALKED ABOUT "FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS" AS THE POSSIBLE REASON FOR ABRASIMOV'S REAPPOINTMENT, VAN WELL WAS NOT THINKING PRIMARILY ABOUT FORMAL CONSULTATIONS UNDER THE QA. WHAT HE SEEMED TO HAVE IN MIND WAS A BROADER AND MORE GENERALIZED EFFORT ON THE PART OF THE SOVIETS TO FIND SOLUTIONS TO THE ISSUES WHICH HAVE HITHERTO PREVENTED A MORE RAPID DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE FRG.

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